



Department of Community Services (DCS)

Memo - DRAFT



To: Michael Rogers – City Administrator
From: Aaron Schrager, DCS Director & City Engineer
ECC: Engineering Division
Date: March 8, 2024
Re: Maple Street Closure

Request:

The Capital Projects & Community Services (CAPS) Committee has tasked the Department to assess the feasibility of implementing a seasonal closure for the 2024 outdoor dining season.

Outstanding items:

Though the following items do not have a direct impact on the recommendation of the Department, they should be addressed prior to a formal decision is made on whether to proceed with a closure on Maple Street.

1. Legality of serving alcohol with the right of way of Maple Street. This likely will impact restaurants' desire to pursue this option.
2. Fees associated with the closure. There seemed to be consensus that a fee would be charged for any closure to offset any costs associated with the closure. Based on feedback that was voluntarily offered by some of the adjacent restaurant owners in addition to the desire lost revenue numbers provided by Parking Services, any fee may be cost prohibitive.
3. Length of closure. For this memo, an assumption was made that the closure would be in a place from Memorial Day until Labor Day, or approximately three (3) months.
4. Area desired or number of tables by the adjacent restaurants.

Requirements:

As stated by NJSA 39:4-8, further detailed in NJAC 16:27-4.1(b)(4) and confirmed by the City's legal counsel, the following must be satisfied to submit the NJDOT for a road closure more than forty-eight (48) hours.

1. A written description of the reason for the non-State highway closure, the anticipated duration of the non-State highway closure, and a description of the non-State highway and State highways that are proposed to serve as a detour route;
2. Plans depicting the non-State highway being closed and the non-State highway or State highways that are proposed to serve as a detour route; and
3. A recommendation regarding the non-State highway closure in the form of a certification by the engineer, bearing the engineer's New Jersey Professional Engineer's seal, that:
 - i. The engineer has conducted an analysis of the data submitted pursuant to this subsection;
 - ii. The engineer has conducted an investigation of traffic movements and conditions on the non-State Highway being closed and those non-State highway or State highways that are proposed to

serve as a detour route;

- iii. The engineer's recommendation is based on the analysis and investigation; and
 - iv. The engineer's recommendation regarding the non-State highway closure is in the interest of safety and the expedition of traffic on the public highways.
4. A recommendation regarding the non-State highway closure in the form of a certification by the engineer, bearing.
 5. Adoption of an ordinance by Common Council, and
 6. Approval of the Ordinance by the Commissioner pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:67-16.10.

Timing:

Assuming a desired closure beginning Memorial Day:

- Data collection and traffic studies completed - March 4 – 15, 2024.
- Ordinance is introduced – April 2, 2024.
- Ordinance is adopted – April 23, 2024.
- Ordinance takes effect. – May 2, 2024.
- Submission to NJDOT - May 3, 2024.
- NJDOT Review – May 3 – 17, 2024 (Two-week assumption)
- Closure implemented – May 24, 2024.

Based on this schedule, all work needs to be completed in the next week. Additionally, this schedule does not factor in a timeline for a fee ordinance amendment.

Master Plan:

Please see Planner's memo regarding road closures within the Master Plan. In brief and as was summarized by City Administrator Rogers at the March 5, 2024 Council Meeting, a large amount of planning needs to be done before a closure should be considered included an analysis into placemaking opportunities for the upcoming Master Plan re-examination.

Assessment:

First and foremost, based on the current workload with the Engineering Division and the general backlog of work that most consultants currently have, there is not enough time to properly vet and complete all necessary tasks that would be required and indefinitely not enough time to afford the opportunity for proper public feedback.

Based on the requirements detailed above, certification must be done of the following:

1. A written description of closure.
This can be done by the Department, but the length and duration of the closure have not been identified.
2. Plans depicting the closure and detour.
This can be prepared and provided by the Department, in conjunction with any studies or feedback from Police and Fire to establish proper detour plans.

3. Certification by an engineer certifying:

- i. Engineer has completed an analysis. – Can be completed by the Department.
- ii. Engineer has completed analysis of traffic movements. – Can be completed by the Department.
- iii. Engineer's recommendation is based on i. and ii. above. – Can be completed by the Department
- iv. Engineer's recommendation is based is in the interest of safety and the expedition of traffic. – Without extensive traffic studies that reflect the ability of the recommended detour to accommodate all traffic without creating a delay to the overall movement of vehicles within and adjacent to the CRBD, this cannot be certified. Additionally, without a formal response by the City's Police, Fire Department, and EMS that a proposed closure on Maple Street will not impact response time or overall safety to the properties within or adjacent to the closure, this cannot be certified.

Recommendations:

The Department strongly believes in the pursuance of additional outdoor dining options beyond the established sidewalk cafes, and the CAPS Committee has set this as a 2024 goal. However, based on the current timeline, which prohibits the ability to properly proceed with the process of implementing a full closure, the Department cannot recommend proceeding with the closure of Maple Street at this time.

The Department will proceed with obtaining quotes for any traffic and safety studies, in addition to analyzing all alternative options within the CRBD. Additionally, the Department will proceed with the conceptual design for a lesser closure that could be implemented for periods less than forty-eight (48) hours that will be circulated to the Police Department within the next two (2) weeks. This will be prepared after the meeting with the restaurant owners that is scheduled to take place later today. If approved by the Police, this plan would be sent to CAPS for further review and comment.



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